

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 ACDA-10 PM-03
SP-02 L-01 PRS-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INRE-00
SSO-00 /049 W
-----130540Z 049128 /14/53
O R 121210Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2636
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5220

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT--PARA THREE)

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TECH, IN, US
SUBJ: PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON US NUCLEAR POLICY

1. THUS FAR, THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL COMMENT ON THE
PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON NUCLEAR POLICY AND RELATIVELY
LITTLE PRESS COMMENT. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, HOWEVER,
HAS PRIVATELY REMARKED ON THE MANNER IN WHICH INDIA WAS
MENTIONED IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT. LIKEWISE, INDIAN ATOMIC
ENERGY CHAIRMAN SETHNA HAS MADE SOME ANTICIPATORY AND
PRIVATE COMMENTXNON THE STATEMENT.

2. IT SEEMS PROBABLY THTAT THE REASON THERE HAS BEEN
NO POLITICAL LEVEL GOVERNMENTAL COMMENT, EITHER PUBLIC
OR PRIVATE, IS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS HAVE
STILL NOT HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS ON THIS SUBJECT
-- A VERY IMPORTANT ONE FOR INDIAN POLICY. THEY HAVE
BEEN MUCH TOO INVOLVED IN FPRST ORGANIZING THEIR GOVERN-
MENT AND THEN DEALING WITH THE NON-ALIGNED COORDINATING
COMMITTEE MEETINGS. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, THAT NUCLEAR
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POLICY WILL NOW BE HIGH ON THEIR AGENDA.

3. THE PRESS WHICH NOW IS AS FREE AS ANY IN THE
WORLD, REPORTED ON THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT SPARSELY AND
HAS OFFERED SOME LIMITED EDITORIAL COMENT:

THE APRIL 10 STATESMAN REPORTED THAT PRESIDENT

CARTER CITED INDIA'S 1974 TEST EXPLOSION AS A PRIME CAUSE FOR HIS POLICY TO CURTAIL US REPROCESSING OF URANIUM AND BREEDER PLANT DEVELOPMENT. THE ARTICLE ASSERTED THAT THERE WERE HEAVY INDICATIONS THAT HE WOULD REVERSE THE EARLIER STAND OF THE US STATE DEPARTMENT THAT THE TARAPUR REFUELLING CONTRACT BE HONORED. AFTER APPLAUDING THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO GO SLOW ON FAST BREEDER NUCLEAR REACTORS, THE HINDUSTAN TIMES ON APRIL 11 SAID THE ASSURANCE THAT THE "US WOULD AUGMENT ITS PRODUCTION CAPACITY FOR ENRICHED URANIUM SO THAT FOREIGN CONSUMERS WOULD HAVE AN ADEQUATE AND TIMELY SUPPLY OF IT WILL BE WELCOME TO COUNTRIES LIKE INDIA". THE COUNTRY WANTS AN ASSURED SUPPLY OF ENRICHED URANIUM FOR THE SAFEGUARDED TARAPUR REACTOR, THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDED.

4. DURING THE COURSE OF A DISCUSSION WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA CONCERNING THE NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE ON APRIL 9, THE CHARGE MENTIONED THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS AND RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS WHICH HAD BEEN SENT AROUND TO MEHTA THE DAY BEFORE. MEHTA SAID HE HAD READ THEM CAREFULLY THAT NIGHT AND THEN OFFERED IMPROMPTU PERSONAL COMMENTS ON THE RESPONSES TO THE PRESS. HE NOTED THAT INDIA HAD BEEN SINGLED OUT UNFAVORABLY THREE TIMES. HE CONSIDERED THAT THIS WAS SOMEWHAT UNFORTUNATE, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE FORMATION SO RECENTLY OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IN DELHI, SOME MEMBERS OF WHICH HAD QUITE STRONG VIEWS ON NUCLEAR POLICY. HE FELT THAT THE US COMMENTS DID NOT TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT INDIA HAD

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NOT EXPLODED A DEVICE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS. HE ALSO SPOKE, AS HAVE MANY OTHER INDIANS, OF THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WESTERN ATTITUDE REGARDING THE INDIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM AND THAT OF THE CHINESE, NOTING THAT HAD INDIA OBTAINED ITS COOPERATION FROM THE SOVIETS, WHO HAD AFTER ALL HELPED THE CHINESE, THE BASIS FOR WESTERN CRITICISM MIGHT NOT HAVE EXISTED. WHEN THE CHARGE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE GOI WOULD ALSO NOTE THE CONCERNS IN OUR POLICY WITH THE PROBLEMS OF NATIONS SUCH AS INDIA ABOUT THE SUPPLY OF NUCLEAR FUEL AND ITS STORAGE, MEHTA SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH INDIA ON NUCLEAR POLICY MUST PROCEED IN THREE STAGES. THE FIRST HE SAID WAS WORKING OUT THE IMMEDIATE TARAPUR PROBLEM. THE SECOND WAS EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVE FUEL CYCLES. THE THIRD HE EXPLAINED CONCERNED BASIC ISSUES OF NUCLEAR POLICY. (HE DID NOT EXPLAIN). IT WAS WITH REGARD TO THE LAST OF THESE THAT HE FELT US IDENTIFICATION OF INDIA

AT THE TIME OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF OUR NEW POLICY
WOULD BE SEEN IN DELHI AS ADDING TO THE EVIDENCE OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST INDIA.

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PM-03 SP-02 L-01 PRS-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00
SSO-00 INRE-00 /049 W
-----121348Z 036315 /53

O R 121210Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO STATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2637
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5220

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5. IN A CONVERSATION ON APRIL 5, SETHA MADE SOME ANTI-
CIPATORY COMMENTS ON THE POLICY STATEMENT TO CONSUL
GENERAL COURTNEY IN BOMBAY. THE DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC
ENERGY CHIEF SAID HE MADE THESE POINTS BECAUSE HE FELT
THE INDIAN REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S NEW ENERGY
POLICY WAS LIKELY TO BE ONE OF DISAPPOINTMENT. FROM
WHAT HE UNDERSTOOD, THE NEW POLICY WAS UNLIKELY TO
GIVE ADEQUATE EMPHASIS TO THE RELIANCE MANY COUNTRIES
IN THE WORLD NOW HAVE ON NUCLEAR POWER OPTION. THERE
SIMPLY WAS NOT ENOUGH URANIUM AROUND TO FUEL THE NUMBER
OF REACTORS THAT WILL BE NEEDED IN THE NEXT 25 YEARS,
WITHOUT THE BREEDER. HE MAINTAINED THAT PLUTONIUM IS
THE BEST BREEDER; THE ALTERNATIVE IS A BREEDER BASED
ON HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM WHICH IN HIS VIEW IS MUCH
MORE DANGEROUS. AS HE PUT IT, IT IS VERY DIFFICULT TO
GO FROM .7 PERCENT ENRICHMENT TO 2 PERCENT ENRICHMENT,
BUT IT IS EASY TO GO FROM THE 80 PERCENT ENRICHMENT
NEEDED FOR A HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM BREEDER TO THE
90 PERCENT ENRICHMENT NEEDED FOR WEAPONS.

6. SETHNA ALSO SAID THAT THE INDIAS WERE VERY CONCERNED
ABOUT THE DISCRIMINATION THAT, IN THEIR VIEW, ALREADY
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CHARACTERIZES US NUCLEAR POLICY. HE CLAIMED THAT THE INDIANS ARE CERTAIN THAT ONE, NON-WEAPONS, NPT WESTERN EUROPEAN STATE IS ALREADY REPROCESSING WITH USG APPROVAL. WHEN COURTNEY QUESTIONED THIS AS TO WHETHER HE MEANT EITHER BRITAIN OR FRANCE, HE SAID THAT BOTH OF THEM ARE WEAPONS STATES AND ONE IS A NON-NPT SIGNATORY, SO HE DID NOT HAVE THEM IN MIND. HE CLAIMED THAT THIS ELEMENT OF DISCRIMINATION

IS BOUND TO TURN OFF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND PERHAPS SOME OTHER NON-NPT STATES. (WE HAVE NOT SEEN SETHNA SINCE THE RELEASE OF THE POLICY STATEMENT.)

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC COMMENTS HAVE BEEN LIMITED SO FAR, WE BELIEVE THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S AND ATOMIC ENERGY CHIEF'S INFORMAL REMARKS PROBABLY REPRESENT THE REACTION WE CAN EXPECT FROM GOVERNMENTAL LEADERS. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT BOTH OFFICIALS FOCUS ON WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE DISCRIMINATORY ASPECTS OF THE STATEMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, NUCLEAR ENERGY, POLICIES, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 12-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE05220
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770128-0589, D770126-0740
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770466/aaaacfdw.tel
Line Count: 196
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c642bda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2832871
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT ON US NUCLEAR POLICY
TAGS: PFOR, TECH, IN, US, (CARTER, JIMMY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c642bda6-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009